(b) and (c) The upgraded aircraft will have advanced avionics and improved weapon delivery systems. There was delay in prototype development, which has since been completed. The deliveries of series upgraded aircraft are expected to commence from 2001-2002, and be completed in about 4-5 years time.

Acquisition of sophisticated artillery guns

512. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there are plans to acquire more sophisticated artillery guns than Bofors 155 mm guns; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) and (b) Various proposals to acquire a state-of-the-art 155 mm Artillery gun, are at present under consideration. No final decision has yet been taken in this regard.

Operation "Poorna Vijay'

513. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether as a part of operation "Poorna Vijay" a full-fledged military exercise was conducted by the Indian Army in co-ordination with the Indian Airforce in the border States of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir during the month of May, 2001;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the objectives for which the military exercise was conducted have since been achieved; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) Yes, Sir. The exercise was conducted in the Western sector including the border States of the region.

(b) A number of Army formations and the Indian Air Force took part in the exercise.

(c) and (d) The objectives for which the exercise was undertaken have been achieved.

Complications in the Way of Acquisition of weapons

514. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on defence opinion that complications are coming in the way of acquisition of weapons a high level Committee was appointed by Government.

(b) if so, the findings of such a Committee;

(c) whether Government have implemented its recommendations;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (e) The Government had set up a Committee in march 2000 headed by the Vice Chief of the Army Staff (VCOAS) to suggest further streamlining of defence procurement procedure to ensure the twin objectives of accountability and expediency. In the meantime, the Government on 17th May, 2000 appointed the Task Force for review of the Management of Defence. This task Force was, *inter-alia, mandated to recommend such organizational and other changes as* considered appropriate to bring about improvements in the procurement process. The VCOAS had made a presentation before the Task Force. After considering the recommendation of the Task Force, the Government have approved creation of a separate dedicated institutional structure namely the Defence Procurement Board, which will undertake the entire gamut of procurement functions. This is expected to facilitate a higher degree of professionalism and cost effectiveness in the process and ensure closer participation by the armed forces in the entire process of decision-making.

Purchase of tanks, Warships from Russia

515. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had placed huge contract for billions of dollars worth of T-90 tanks, warships and sophisticated SO-30MKI attack figters to